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TAGS: [HA](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: PREVAL NEARS COMPROMISE ON CEP; PRIVATE SECTOR TO NOMINATE FORMER DG JACQUES BERNARD

Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson, reason 1.5(b) and (d)

¶1. C) Sources both within the Presidency and without have told us that a compromise is near on the reformation of the Provisional Electoral Council. If true, this would permit President Preval to name a new council and set the date for Senatorial elections, ending an impasse that has preoccupied Haiti's political elites for the past month. Preval told Ambassador October 31 that he wants to get this issue out of the way so he can move forward on constitutional reform. He reiterated his commitment to holding senatorial elections as soon as possible after the formation of a new CEP.

¶2. (C) Following a series of negotiations and posturing too convoluted to go into here, the private sector has agreed to meet on Saturday, November 4, to name two candidates for its "slot" in the CEP. At the top of the list is former CEP DG Jacques Bernard. Current CEP private sector member Francois Benoit is also likely to be included. Benoit, who saw Preval yesterday, will turn the nomination down, but for form's sake, the private sector wants him on the list. Preval's counselors have told us that Preval is prepared to immediately name Bernard CEP Director General (and chief organizer of elections), and may make him a CEP member as well. There is no prohibition against a member also serving as DG.

¶3. (C) Bernard is the key here. He was the DG of the CEP that managed all three of Haiti's recent national elections for the presidency, legislature and local government. Most observers believe that his participation is critical to the credibility of any new CEP. Originally reluctant to return because he believed that Preval had "reservations" about him, Bernard was assiduously courted by a series of envoys from the presidency and the private sector, as well as by Haiti's friends in the international community. Skeptical that Preval is serious about elections, Bernard pressed his interlocutors hard for guarantees that the elections will go forward, guarantees that were apparently offered by the Palace. He meets with Preval early next week.

¶4. (C) Presidential Counselor Gabriel Verret tells us that once the private sector submits its names, other Haitian sectors will fall into place. He says that the church and unions have already committed to offer candidates. In the meantime, Preval continues to meet with representative of the parties and religious communities, and last night caucused again with representatives of AMCHAM and the private sector. He has canceled his trip to Miami for dental surgery, telling

intimates that resolving this problem is too important to be left pending.

¶5. (C) Comment. Despite getting Bernard on board (no mean feat), Preval is not out of the woods. Until the CEP is up and running, and Bernard is able to resuscitate the structure that the current Director General spent the last three months dismantling, elections are still a ways off. Getting Bernard to agree to return, if this indeed materializes, is a plus but not the only challenge Haiti faces. The brouhaha over the elections and the CEP has again laid bare the societal and political differences which are never very far from the surface here. Preval - and the Haitian political elites - will need a surer hand than we have seen thus far to manage these divisions during any future debate on the more treacherous issue of constitutional reform.

SANDERSON